

# ideas for parents

## Practical Suggestions for Building Assets in Your Child

### FAST FACTS

#### ASSET #30: Responsibility

Youth are more likely to grow up healthy when they accept and take personal responsibility.

60%

of youth surveyed by Search Institute have this asset in their lives.\*

#### What Are Assets?

Assets are 40 key building blocks to help kids succeed. "Responsibility" is one of six positive values assets.

\* Based on Search Institute surveys of almost 100,000 6th- to 12th-grade youth throughout the United States.

## 4 Keys to Responsibility

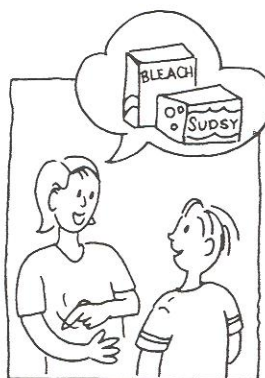
**I**n *Raising a Responsible Child*, authors Don Dinkmeyer, Ph.D., and Gary D. McKay, Ph.D., point out four keys to instilling the value of responsibility in your child.

**Key #1**—Let your child do it. Too many parents do tasks for their children, instead of letting their children do them. Why? Some parents think that their children are incapable of accomplishing the task (which is true if they're never given the opportunity to learn). Also, our busy lifestyles often keep us from taking the time to let our children learn and master skills.

**Key #2**—Expect it to take time. The best time to teach children responsibility is when you're not in a hurry, when you both do not have pressures to be elsewhere or doing other things. Children will become discouraged, self-conscious, and uncooperative when they sense they are being rushed or if they're not living up to a parent's unrealistic expectation.

**Key #3**—Ask, don't demand. Instill responsibility by invitation. Begin by asking your child to help you with something, such as doing laundry. Do it together. Gradually teach your child so that your child can do it by her- or himself.

**Key #4**—Use consequences. When your child does not follow through with something that he or she is solely responsible for, stop talking and nagging. Let natural and logical consequences occur. For example, one family said each family member should take responsibility for putting their things away. Anything that wasn't put away would be put in a box in the garage. Children gradually took responsibility for putting things away because they got tired of walking outside to



the garage to dig through a box to find their things.

Another important way to encourage responsibility is to model it yourself. Follow through on your commitments, especially to your child. When you can't or don't do something you should have, don't make excuses. Talk with your child about how you plan to avoid getting into a similar situation in the future.

### time together

Three ways to help your child become more responsible:

1. Break new tasks into smaller steps and teach them one by one until your child can take responsibility for the entire task alone.
2. Use lists for keeping track of responsibilities. Encourage family members each to maintain their own list.
3. Recognize your child's responsible behavior. Say something when it's small. Celebrate when it's big.



**Quick Tip:**  
**Valuing responsibility**  
**requires empathy.**

## **Your Job as Parent**

***As a parent, give realistic responsibilities to your child. Take time to teach them, and don't nag or rescue them when they "forget." Instead, create a home environment that allows children to identify new ways they can succeed in being responsible so that they can try again.***

### **talk together**

*Questions to discuss with your child:*

- *What do you currently take responsibility for? Why?*
- *What do you wish you had responsibility for? Why?*
- *How can we help you learn new responsibilities without overwhelming you?*

## **Final Word**

**"I believe that every right implies a responsibility; every opportunity, an obligation; every possession, a duty."**

**—John D. Rockefeller, Jr., U.S. senator from West Virginia**

## **Building on Responsibility**

**T**eenagers and young adults don't magically become responsible overnight. It takes time for young people to learn to value and take responsibility. Break down responsibilities and build on them as young people master each step. For example, you probably eventually want your child to take responsibility for the cleanliness of her or his room.

- At age five or six, negotiate a weekly time when you and your child clean up the room together.
- After your child masters that, have a weekly time when family members each clean up their own rooms. Periodically check your child's progress during this time.
- After your child masters that, have family members take responsibility for cleaning up their rooms on a weekly basis without having a set time.
- After your child masters that, ask if family members are ready to take responsibility for keeping their rooms clean without being reminded. If so, do this.



### **More Stuff You Can Use**

**Raising a Responsible Child.** This book gives practical tips on teaching responsibility. (Available from Simon and Schuster, 200 Old Tappan Road, Old Tappan, NJ 07675; 1-800-223-2348.)

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